

# The Book Club of California Quarterly News-Letter

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## “RARE BOOKS” IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

*Part One of Two Parts*

Michael T. Ryan and David C. Weber

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Peter Rutledge Koch

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# “Rare Books” in University Libraries

*Michael T. Ryan and David C. Weber*

We hope these comments, arranged in ten topics, will contribute to an understanding of how “rare books” are viewed within the university. We do not pretend to speak for the North American university community. Rather, these are views held by at least two librarians with many years of experience in universities East, Midwest, and West and who love and work with books of every vintage.

## What is a Rare Book?

“Rarity is the salt in book-collecting. But if you take too much salt, the flavour of the dish is spoiled; and if you take it neat it will make you sick. Similarly, those book collectors who exalt rarity above any other criterion tend to develop third-degree bibliomania, which is a painful and slightly ridiculous ailment.”

— John Carter’s *ABC for Book-Collectors*, 1960

VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES prompt people to call a particular book “rare.” Scarcity is one obvious condition, for example a book published in only one hundred copies or an old volume of which only a few copies are now extant. Unique physical qualities may also be a qualification: for instance, a book with a fore-edge painting or one with a canceled title page. Provenance is a factor, such as a book with annotations by a famous person. Is not any book published, say, two hundred years ago a rare book? Indeed, yes, it may be so regarded even if it is fairly common in collections or in the book trade.

Then there are compounding factors. Modern first editions have an elaborate system of “points” against which to measure their rarity

and thus peg their market value. Or a book might be a landmark or "high point" in its field. Such distinction is gained by inclusion in a connoisseurship list such as a Grolier 100, *Printing and the Mind of Man*, and similar lists. However, an older book devoid of any apparent interest is just an old book; it may be rare but the nature of its rarity has yet to be proposed. Obviously, what is "rare" to one person may not be to another. Indeed, the rarity of an item is generally incidental to its pedagogical and scholarly utility.

For the antiquarian book trade, David Magee facetiously defined a rare book as "any one you have not seen before." And with his best whimsy, he comments (in his booklet, *A Course in Correct Cataloguing*): "These are always hard to sell. If you can, however, discover a three-line preface or a couple of corrected spellings, you may with all honesty describe your books as Third (and best) edition."

More sober if pedestrian is the 1949 summation by William A. Jackson, head of Harvard University's Houghton Library: "A rare book is a book which either has been regarded for generations as an intrinsically important one, or which, if a little-known book, may be so regarded when its virtue has been recognized.... It is only when in varying degrees intrinsic worth, condition, and rarity are combined that one has a rare book."

#### How do University Librarians View their Rare Books?

The notion of a rare book is not in itself part of the working vocabulary of academic librarians. While they acknowledge that many volumes in their collections are indeed scarce or rare, few would speak of their library as aiming to collect rare books. Rather, the library has rare books but does not purposefully seek to acquire them *per se*.

Librarians select items to be added to the collections based on the degree to which they support the teaching and research of the institution now and in the near future. Rarity is not the driving motivation for seeking to acquire a particular item. The university librarian therefore seeks out or accepts from donors the books which contribute to the educational and scholarly quality of these collections, and thus are very useful items for the purposes of the institution. The library therefore "has" some books that are rare but did not ever set out to acquire rare books.

The term "rare books" also may be shorthand for a variety of materials which are distinctive among a library's collections. Most libraries segregate some of the collections into a Special Collections unit. Staff of these units also have custody of manuscripts, archival collections, old maps and prints, selected artifacts, and sometimes fragile materials or items on brittle paper which are old and have not yet received conservation treatment. The physical conditions for housing and use of these collections and the rules under which they may be read, copied, or exhibited are distinctive and designed specifically for these materials. Thus the need to apply those three conditions generally defines what is housed within these special collections.

#### *What Use is Made of a Rare Book in a University Setting?*

First some context: one of the maxims of academic librarianship is that twenty per cent of the collections circulate eighty per cent of the time. Thus eighty per cent of the collections slumber quietly on the shelves awaiting their five minutes or five hours or five days of use. Some books may sit unmoved on library shelves for a generation or more. A cost accountant would see fat here, but such is the incubation process of research: it is resource-consumptive.

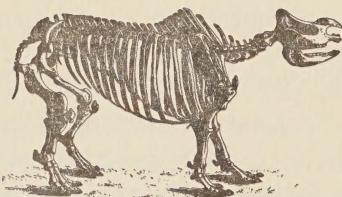
There is a similar ratio of use that seems to operate within special collections units. There are those twenty per cent or so items that tend to feature prominently in exhibits, class assignments, presentations, demonstrations, and the like. Sometimes these are high spots, sometimes they are deliberately commonplace. But they get used again and again. They are, for most of the outside world, the public face of the rare book collection. These books are often chosen to evoke the "wow!" factor. But they also inspire people, stimulate, and create ties that are important. Rare book collections presented to students—and alumni and friends—are expressions of fidelity. They tell people that the institution values tradition and continuity as much as it does innovation and change.

Rare books are also the stuff of exhibits and associated publications. These exhibits and their publicity are important because they can be ways of establishing or educating constituencies, acknowledging donors and friends, linking with the curriculum.

To further illustrate the use of rare book in a university setting, we quote from *The Barchas Collection at Stanford University: A Catalogue of the Samuel I. and Cecile M. Barchas Collection in the History of Science and Ideas*, (Stanford University Libraries, 1999) from a forward by Prof. Rosemary A. Stevens (University of Pennsylvania): "Rare book collections have invaluable scholarly significance as collections; that is, in one place one may find, study, compare and think about assembled books and documents in a systematic way in an intellectual treasure house. First editions of what were to become classical texts may be consulted, and subsequent editions may be examined as well for revealing changes in the texts and in their presentation. Historians ask what are at root simple questions though the answers may be contested and complex: for example, about what science is, how, why, when and where certain ideas (and not others) are created and by whom, and how (and how successfully) they are disseminated. The very existence of a major collection such as this—its character, richness, and range of materials—may influence the type and amount of work done in a particular scholarly area."

And scholastic relevance is made clear in the introduction by

Henry Lowood, Stanford's Curator of the History of Science: "Courses introduced during the 1980s and 1990s have led hundreds of students to the riches of the Barchas collection." This statement is demonstrated by mention of courses relying heavily on the Barchas collection of rare old volumes, including: "Introduction to Cosmology," seminar on "Topics in the History of Mathematics from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century," "History of Modern Physics," "The Growth of Scientific Knowledge," the undergraduate core course on the "Scientific Revolu-



Squelette du rhinocéros unicorne.

Cuvier. Recherches sur les ossements fossiles de quadrupèdes, 1822.

45a. CUVIER, GEORGES, BARON, 1769-1832.

Essay on the theory of the earth. By Baron G. Cuvier ... With geological illustrations, by Professor Janssen, 5th ed., tr. from the last French ed., with numerous additions by the author and translator.

Bibliographie. Illustrations. Planches. 4 vols. 8vo.

p. front. IX (i.e. x) pl. 21 cm. Translation of: *Recherches sur les révolutions de la surface du globe*.

Plates engraved by W. H. and D. Lister. Includes bibliographical references and index.

Provenance: Cecil St. Quintin (signature); K. Ricardo [?].

45b. CUVIER, GEORGES, BARON, 1769-1832.

Historie des progrès des sciences naturelles,

depuis 1789 jusqu'à ce jour, par M. le baron G. Cuvier...

Boston: Peter P. Braine, 1822.

45c. CUVIER, GEORGES, BARON, 1769-1832.

Lessons d'anatomie comparée, de G. Cuvier ...

recueillies et publiées sous ses yeux par C.

Duméril.

Paris: Crochard, libraire ... Fathier, libraire ...

Baudouin, imprimeur ... 1822. 8vo. 2 v. 21 cm.

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tion," "Science in the Enlightenment," "The Darwinian Revolution: History of Biological Thought," and "When Worlds Collide: The Trial of Galileo."

Rare books are the corpus of research. If anyone doubts that, talk to the curator of any major university library collection. Further, the Web and the Internet have multiplied constituencies; the number of bodies in the reading room is now only one index of use.

#### Does the Concept of Rare Books Enter into University Acquisition Programs?

One answer may be provided by the published acquisition policy statement which administratively guides the collecting program. Using Stanford University as one case, most relevant is a paragraph on "Publication Date" which conveys Stanford's intent with respect to materials sought for addition to the collection.

"Current and retrospective materials are collected. Retrospective collecting is influenced by program need, collection strength, availability of desired material on the book market, and availability from other libraries. Although retrospective collecting is less actively pursued in many areas of the collection than it was at one time, there remain areas of continuing focus, and new areas that arise because of academic program additions and changes. Whichever the case, retrospective collecting is done to acquire sources not in the collection and needed locally for current research and teaching, and to fulfill collecting commitments made to the University of California Berkeley or the Research Libraries Group partners."

To continue, the field of art history serves as an example of how the Stanford document makes particular the general statement quoted above: "While emphasis is given to the acquisition of current titles, the catalogs of about thirty antiquarian art book dealers and the several reprinters who specialize in art history materials are regularly checked for desiderata that will fill gaps in the present collection." And the Stanford Department of Special Collections includes this in its policy statement: "The Department does not, in principle, collect material or maintain collections of purely antiquarian interest."

No acknowledgment of rare books here! Whether or not other institutions have similar policy documents, the intent would be very

similar, with the emphases and language merely providing shades of differences which reflect local traditions, academic priorities, and financial conditions.

#### *Under What Circumstances will the Library Accept Gifts of Rare Books?*

When a library is offered a first or revised edition previously lacking, such a book will always be gratefully accepted when it adds depth to a collection important to the university. A copy of a book already in the library may be welcome when that title is heavily used or is worn and will need rebinding or replacement. A somewhat shabby rarity may have been shelved amidst the open collections; the pristine gift replacing it may be shelved in Special Collections.

Furthermore, it has long been known and appreciated that in the era of the hand press no two copies of a title are apt to be identical in every respect. Hence, the Shakespeare industry has devoted many years and much ink to amassing variations among the various quartos and within the First Folio. Indeed, the latter is probably the most thoroughly documented literary artifact in Anglo-American literature. The point here is fairly straightforward: for some librarians the whole notion of the "duplicate" is deeply flawed when applied to early modern printed books. So, apparent duplicates will be added to collections even without firm knowledge of the nature of the variations.

And yet items in subject fields outside the teaching and research interests of an institution will at times be redirected to a more suitable institution, a different library for the donor to consider for his or her gift book. This happens more often than one might think; librarians balance various factors in deciding when to make such a referral. One factor is paramount — the feelings and objectives of the individual who is ready to dispose of his or her book. The librarian may influence this owner, may add some new options for the owner to think about, can provide some specific details which can inform the owner's decision, and yet the owner of the book will eventually do what that person deems as best meeting a personal objective.

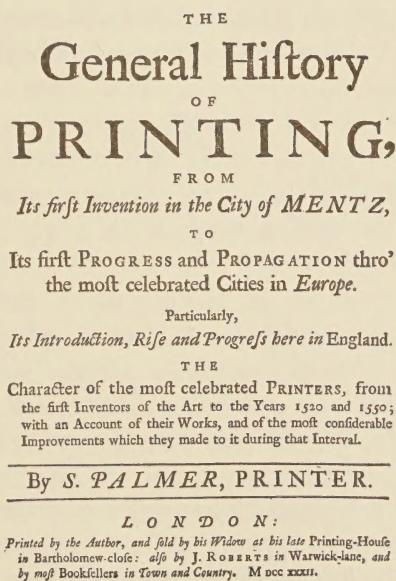
Many a book has long been in private hands and read by scores before ending up in an academic library to continue thus serving, as evidenced by the tailpiece to this article (from Stanford's 1799 British volume on astronomy by Margaret Bryan).

## When Does Adding a Rare Book to the Collections Add Scholarly Value?

This may best be answered by giving an example, a small study of the derivation of the word "colophon." The ancient Greek city-state of Colophon, in what is now Western Turkey, was well known as a military power with formidable cavalry. Among early uses of the word "colophon," Desiderius Erasmus in his *Adages* provides early quotations using the word in the sense of "crowning touch" or "finishing stroke" as deriving from the final success of the cavalry of Colophon.

The research objective then was to find out when this long-lasting meaning of the word was transformed so as to apply to the descriptive statement of book creation, placed at the end of a book as its "colophon." The study entailed reading dozens of rather drab seventeenth- and eighteenth-century books, most rather common, not terribly expensive, though not at all easy to find either in the antiquarian book market or in accessible university library collections. One found no use of this bibliographical application of the word in publications of the seventeenth century, and frequent usage in the bibliographical sense late in the eighteenth. So research narrowed the date, working into the late seventeenth and back from the late eighteenth. It was tedious. (Not used by Humphrey Wanley, the learned antiquary, in his 1703 communiqué to the Royal Society about the invention of printing. Not used in 1713 by the fine Scottish printer James Watson in his version of La Caille's *History of the Art of Printing*. And so on.)

If one could pinpoint the country and place where and date when this new use of the word "colophon" appeared, one small bit of information would be contributed to the history of the book.



The now-famous *General History of Printing* by Samuel Palmer, 1732.

The researcher[s] concluded that this new use of the word occurred in England about 1730. And the first time the word was published in this sense was in the 1729-1732 book written by Samuel Palmer, *The General History of Printing, from its first Invention in the City of Mentz to its first Progress and Propagation thro' the most celebrated Cities in Europe*.

The point is that the assemblage of books—old and of modest market value—constituted the basis for this bit of research. Almost all the books used for this study were shelved in Special Collections. None were “intrinsically important” by Jackson’s criteria. Except for the way in which each told of the spread of printing, these several dozen volumes were of no evident scholarly use, did not add significant lasting new insights or historical facts, and each publication was quickly out of date. Only an assiduous librarian (perhaps prodded by some faculty pedant focused on seventeenth-century English history or social life?) would have continued building a collection of such seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English works, nondescript books which most people would believe to have no lasting merit whatsoever. However, as this case may exemplify, adding pedestrian old books to an otherwise excellent research collection did add scholarly value. Again, using Jackson, the Palmer book’s “virtue has been recognized” at last.

J. Wood.  
1891

*E. proprius Joannis Smith*  
May 4<sup>th</sup> 1890. — ✓H

*A. Le Maine 1891.*  
✓V.V. X

### Part One of Two Parts

*The several illustrations are used by courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Library.*

Dr. Ryan is Director of the Annenberg Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. He previously served as the Frances and Charles Field Curator and Chief of Special Collections and the Assistant Director of Collection Development, Stanford University Libraries. Mr. Weber is Director of the Stanford University Libraries, Emeritus.

## PHILOSOPHY AND FISHING

By Peter Rutledge Koch

*The Year 2000 Stephen A. Kanter Lecture on California Printing at the Center for 17th and 18th Century Studies and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library. Titled: Philosophy and Printing in the Real West: Herakleitos in Montana, Diogenes on Telegraph Avenue. Saturday, March 18, 2000.*

I think that I should establish, early on, that I came late to printing. No tales of picking up my first composing stick at four years of age. In school I was imagining I might become a botanist/explorer, wear a pith helmet, and drink expensive gin in Victorian hotels near the mouths of great rivers. Outside of school, my youth was spent reading and fly-fishing on the Clearwater and Blackfoot rivers and then, in the winter... on skis. A severe attack of angst occurred during my sixteenth year, and thereafter, my early manhood was spent in the intellectual fogs of a budding poet *maudite*. From age seventeen to twenty-eight, I was up to my eyeballs in Albert Camus and Arthur Rimbaud. Finally free of compulsory education, I traveled often, and when I was in Montana if I wasn't on the river, I was in the library or the bars.

But I was also in the lecture hall — I studied parasitology and comparative anatomy, Meister Eckhardt and medieval scholasticism, symbolic logic and the history of science. I was as hungry for knowledge as I was for a good whiskey.

I was not a good student — I was erratic and eclectic — I pored over Spinoza and Hegel and ignored Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell. I interrupted my classroom education as often as I felt compelled — which was perilously often — to pursue travels to places like Aspen, Colorado, where I spent four months living in a mine shack reading German novels by kerosine lantern at night and trout fishing by day, bartering fresh cutthroat for the rest of the meal among the Eastern art students who would hang about the town in the summertime. In 1965 I spent five profligate months living in Tangier. In the spring of 1970, I lived on Passage Brady in Paris while listening to lectures at the University of Vincennes given by my old Missoula neighbor and friend, Leslie Fiedler. I once moved to remote Oregon to house-sit a ranch and hang out with two Canadian

artists who were indoctrinating me into the mysteries of Charles Mingus and Thelonius Monk. I was in search of the marvelous — wherever it should lead me.

Throughout my life certain philosophical themes have suggested themselves — primarily those of Permanence and Change and Rivers and Fire. Herakleitos, the Greek philosopher/poet, was my master, and I was introduced to him by Henry Bugbee, a fly-fisherman and philosopher. With Henry I read Buddhist texts, St. Augustine, and the French existentialists. Henry was a philosopher on horseback, and in the winter, we read the pre-Socratics and went skiing together.

Before Henry, there was Norman MacLean, a neighbor on the lake where we spent summers, whom I had known since infancy; he was a Shakespearian scholar and writer who taught me something about perversity and something about philosophy. Norman was a powerful fisherman, and we fished together a few times each summer between my twelfth and fifteenth birthdays on that treacherous stretch of the Big Blackfoot called Cahoon's Canyon. Norman would utter enigmatic expressions that were instructional (if oblique) and I was supposed to think about them — and I did. Norman was as close to Herakleitos as anyone I ever encountered. Bugbee was more my Parmenides — a poetic man who sought the truth in his own words — in that stream of consciousness that he plied the way he fished the Bitterroot River. In my imagination Herakleitos will always be short and dark; Parmenides, a tall and white-haired patrician.

From them both I learned to prefer a philosophy derived from fly casting on the great rivers of Western Montana to a studied and academic approach....

As a child I could be transported to a happiness nearly beyond endurance by the powerful surge of a mature cutthroat trout shooting up out of the dark waters of Rattlesnake Creek — the symbolic structures buried in consciousness were never so clearly revealed in any textbook. Later in my life, to create a book or write a poem, to work out the intricate design decisions and the imperfections, like that silver trout in dark water, brings imagination to light. Printing, like fly fishing, is a knowledge built on art — revealing the hidden nature of things.

I came to printing in need of a grounding in substance and beauty to augment my intellectual work. Too many years as a poet *maudite* had taken their toll. I suffered a deep biological calling to get my hands on the stuff of this world and get my mind out of its swirl of notions and unrealized ideas. Words were never enough, and I gravitated to an artisan's life that embodied art and intellect in a practical fashion. Upon setting up my press I soon discovered that I could make money printing for my neighbors and friends.

In design and typography I am the same classicist as I am on the trout stream. Good typography comes from measure and balance and an eye tuned to the nuances of letterforms as well as the forms of language that comprise our thoughts. Letterforms are just a part of the consideration. The criteria that I live by are venerable, tested and difficult to master. A project as simple as a business card can become a challenge to create beauty at the same time as delivering information as prosaic as an e-mail address. A classical approach to any art is one of mastery and innovation. Mastery implies tradition and competence while innovation keeps the traditions alive to inherent nuance and change. I learned from my masters to seek the equipoise and grace of the design from within myself. It all starts inside a vision that can be as flexible as it is tough.

Printing and the pursuit of ideas — the constant return to the stone—the sound of metal type hitting the pan of the composing stick in the quiet meditation of work — the familiar feel of the stick and the reach of the job case — slowly assembling the fixed text by the fleeting motions of hand composition: that is the true meaning of *festina lente*, the symbolic anchor and the dolphin. Speed and constancy. To print by hand, to design a structure that transmits the text, is to ask fundamental questions about reading, about the enduring qualities of our literacy — how we feel about the work. By questioning, by asking fundamental questions of ourselves, of our acts and of our arts, we rescue for our thoroughly accelerated civilization the simplicity of working with our hands in the vineyard of the text.

Diogenes, that quintessential cynic, asks us to question our habits and our superficial comforts — to recover the original impulses, the fundamental needs of our condition. We have seen him recently on Telegraph Avenue — jeering and cajoling. To study the pre-Socratics

is akin to producing the hand composed book—it is a return to origins, a journey upstream towards the sources of literacy and the defining birth of our civilization.

Printing and fly fishing have supplied me with the metaphors, those surfaces off which I catch my own reflection. These glimpses provide me with the contours of my life and a physiognomy by which I recognize myself.

Remember, I was born a fisherman in a library. I have my tales of trout fishing and fine printing — and what, after all, is the difference?



*Peter Rutledge Koch is a designer, printer, and teacher in Berkeley.*

## COMMISSIONING A FINE BINDING: Unraveling the Mysteries

Making the Decision ♦ Where to Find Your Bookbinder ♦ Costs and Time

By Joanne Sonnichsen

Making the decision to commission a fine binding is a relatively easy process for the experienced collector. When it is done for the first time, however, new mysteries arise for the neophyte: what book to have bound, whom to ask to bind it, how to begin the process, how much will it cost, how long will it take?

Choosing a book for a fine binding is a very personal decision, and there is a wide variety of reasons for the choice. Select a book that has a special meaning for you. A special edition of a book you have loved, a book of which you are the author, a fine-press book from a press you have admired, a binding done by someone whose work has influenced you, a special book whose cover can no longer be repaired—all can be enhanced by a unique bookbinding.

There is only one reason not to commission a fine binding, and that is for financial investment. Whether your binding increases or decreases in monetary value should be of less interest than how much your appreciation of it increases over the years.

The next mystery to be solved is that of the bookbinder to choose. Fortunately, there are several design bookbinders in the United

States whose work can be seen either in exhibitions or dealers' bookshops or in catalogues. Some fine binders even have their own web sites. There are certainly many other fine binders outside of the United States, but for a first commission you may be more comfortable with someone closer to home.

Within the San Francisco Bay Area there are two scheduled exhibitions put on by the Hand Bookbinders of California each year: one at the San Francisco Public Library and the other at the San Francisco Center for the Book. Often there are additional special exhibitions, such as "Containers for Intragrammes," at The Book Club of California in September/October, 2000, "British Fine Bookbinding," at the San Francisco Public Library in November/December, 2000, and "2001: Fine Bookbindings for Book Club of California Publications," co-sponsored by The Book Club of California and the Hand Bookbinders of California, in January/February, 2001, at The Book Club of California.

The Guild of Book Workers, a national organization, sponsors traveling exhibitions. The catalogue from the latest exhibition can be found on their web site: <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byorg/gbw>. The GBW web site will also have announcements of bookbinding exhibitions in other areas of the country.

Both the Hand Bookbinders of California, Post Office Box 193216, San Francisco, California 94119, and the Guild of Book Workers, 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10175, have back catalogues for sale at a nominal price. Look for the unique bindings that appeal to you.

Many fine and antiquarian book dealers have fine bindings for sale. You can visit their shops individually and/or visit their booths at a Book Fair. If you find exactly what you want, part of your problem of being a first-time purchaser of a fine binding is solved, because you now have a better idea of what is possible in terms of appreciation.

Although each binder's work is unique, there is usually a sense of unity that runs through each binder's work, so that you can begin to tell the work of a given bookbinder even when you see it for the first time. Now you are ready to select your binder.

Once you have discovered a bookbinder whose work strongly appeals to you, call the binder and make an appointment to visit him

(or her) in his studio. Ask to see other examples of his work and engage him in a discussion about fine hand bookbinding. You will probably come to a meeting of the minds, especially inasmuch as he knows you like his work.

Talk about the commission: style, price, and time. You will get your most interesting binding by leaving the design completely up to the binder (since you like his work overall, you should not be disappointed). If you have seen a binding of his that you particularly admire, mention it and tell him why you liked it, but asking him to repeat himself is usually asking for more of a copy than an original — even when it is done by the same person.

Most design bookbindings will cost somewhere in the low four figures (i.e., \$2,000 and up), with miniatures costing about, or less than, half of that. Other fine bindings, in full or half leather, are usually priced by the size of the text block and the kind of leather used. They will usually cost somewhere in the low three figures on up (i.e., \$250 for a very small text block with a half-leather binding of bookbinders' goatskin, to the very low four figures for a very large full Morocco, non-design binding). Your chosen bookbinder will be comfortable talking about price with you. Usually you can ask for either a price or estimate from him. In certain cases, you can tell him honestly what you can afford to pay (which figure he may feel he has to reject). This should not be a bargaining session, but rather an appreciation on both sides of the imagination, skills, and work to be done. Most bookbinders prefer to be paid when the work is completed.

Now patience on the part of the collector comes into play. Most probably your bookbinder has other work to finish before he can begin your book. For most design bookbindings, a good part of the time goes into the design. Some designs come easily — others come only after a series of rejections by the bookbinder. Give your bookbinder enough time to enable him to do his best. To wait ten years would be questionable, but expecting delivery in less than one year may be unrealistic.

Your bookbinder will call you when your book is finished. Not only should you be pleased to have this unique book, you should also exult in the realization that your request was part of what brought it into being.

Your bookbinder may request the loan of your book for exhibition. That decision is entirely up to you, but remember that, by placing your cherished volume in the public eye, you, as an experienced commissioner of fine bindings, may help a neophyte take his first steps.

•••

Fine designer/binder Joanne Sonnichsen of Menlo Park is past president of The Book Club of California.

### Reviews

JoAnn Levy. *For California's Gold: A Novel*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000. (5589 Arapahoe Avenue, Suite 206C, Boulder, CO 80303) 280 pages. \$24.95 (cloth) ISBN 0-87081-566-0

JoAnn Levy, in the fourth volume of the Women's West Series, graphically tells the harsh story of the overlanders who rushed to seek gold in 1849. Her vehicle is the journal of Mrs. Sarah Daniels, seen from April 3, 1856, as she ruminates back seven full years to the day she left Illinois for the Golden State. This story is more complex than Levy's *Daughter of Joy* (1998), winner of the 1999 Women Writing the West Willa [Cather] Literary Award. In the first, Chinese prostitute Ah Toy, a historical character from a different culture, constrained Levy. In *For California's Gold*, Sarah Daniels is a composite of many westering women, yet JoAnn Levy's voice comes through, direct and natural. Given the sustained vigor of the narrative, perhaps the spirit is autobiographical.

Sarah, mother of four children, is a timid "mouse-coward" in her own estimation. "We were women," she explains. "We were expected to want our safe shelters, to fear what lay beyond. And we did." Soon, though, Sarah envies the Lowell Mill Girls who earned their own way. Such awareness will increase.

Then the elephant loomed in '49. Husband Caleb wished to see it. "I'm thirty-five years old," he declared, "and I've never chosen or decided anything for myself. If I don't do it, my life will have been just a succession of drifting things that happened until the sexton buried me." Westward they went into brutal, elephantine hardship.

Gold was a mirage; a madness. "We were on a death trail, and everyone knew it," Sarah mournfully declares as, preoccupied with mortality, she records in her journal every grave they pass.

Unfortunately, the death of a young son, followed by that of her husband, leaves Sarah detached, even from members of her family. She observes on the lonely journey, "I was never one gifted at seeing more than presented itself," and admits she never knew her husband of fifteen years. "Caleb seemed to me more and more a stranger." As other characters are seen through Sarah Daniels's eyes, they do not speak for themselves. A reader has difficulty breaking free from the memoir. Sarah acknowledges "the gray fog in which I resided like a ghost."

The Sarah of the trail is tedious, passive, and not too likable. "It seemed to me that a woman's life just happened, and the happiness of it lay inexorably tied to whatever good, bad, or indifferent man stumbled into it. A woman did nothing much of her own, I concluded."

Beckoning California, though, tugs at her constant desire to go home. In Dutch Flat, in the fall of 1849, she begins to earn a living by baking pies. "We not only can do what we have to do, we can do what we decide to do," she declares. That December, starting a restaurant, "full of purpose and resolve," she attacks a rusted stove and finds she has become "without regret" a "stranger to the [mousy] woman I had been in Illinois."

Gradually, she emerges from her gloom to rejoice with her new husband, widower Zeb Tillman. Zeb likewise knows heartbreak through loss of a wife and babe, but sees the world differently. "It's a new beginning, California is," he announces, as he exchanges a teamster's wagon for a plow. Finding joy in the tiniest things, Zeb postulates, "Life, that's what counts. That's how things are, Sarah. We just keep going." This elephant turns out to be a most complex beast. Quixotic, he is what you see. Readers may encounter a pachydermatous experience as they go *For California's Gold*.

—Dr. Robert J. Chandler

Robert Stinnett. *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor.* The Free Press. \$26

Long-time Book Club of California member Robert Stinnett has written one of the most original and essential recent works concerning World War II, intelligence gathering, and international diplomacy: *Day of Deceit*.

It has long been suspected that America knew well in advance about the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941, but did nothing to stop it — long suspected, indeed, but Stinnett is the first to provide the hard evidence. In fact, Stinnett has discovered the secret strategy of how the Japanese were goaded into launching the war that had by this time become inevitable. Still, powerful isolationist forces, among them Charles Lindbergh, William Randolph Hearst, and Henry Ford, opposed American involvement in stopping Germany from invading Britain. Had that happened, Hitler would have controlled the British Navy and would then have crossed the seas to Canada to attack America on its eastern flank while Japan would attack from the west.

Only when German submarines sank one American ship after another did the United States declare war in Europe. Asia was another matter. Japan would have to be provoked to attack, and so it was to be. In his many years of research of documents recovered under countless Freedom of Information Act requests, Stinnett discovered the smoking gun — an eight-point strategy that, as implemented at the highest levels of government, i.e., The White House, resulted in a Japanese attack on the United States.

With Roosevelt's death a few months before the World War II victory, the secrets were kept for many years — even from Congressional investigators. Only through Stinnett's persistent research do we now have the complete story of the political strategies and the resultant cover-up. The amazing story has landed Stinnett's book on the best-seller lists — *Day of Deceit* is now in its sixth printing and has sold close to one-hundred thousand copies in the American edition alone. In Britain, Constable publishes the work, and of course there is a Japanese edition as well.

Stinnett's account belongs in every collection of warfare, diplomacy, espionage, or cryptography. Beyond that, it's a darn good read.

— Harlan Kessel

### Gifts & Acquisitions

At the urging of Gary Kurutz, the Club has acquired *Beauty and the Book: Fine Editions and Cultural Distinction in America* by Megan L. Benton (Yale University Press, 2000). This scholarly study of "the interplay between the ideal and real nature of fine publishing" in the 1920s and 30s begins with a vignette of Porter Garnett at Carnegie Institute of Technology. It mentions the Club more than once, and deals with names well known to Club members: Angelo, Cerf, Grabhorn, Nash, Updike, Warde. This is a distinguished book, well produced, provocative, and worthy to be widely read.



From the author, Q. David Bowers, we have received a copy of *The Treasure Ship S. S. Brother Jonathan: Her Life and Loss 1850-1865*. (Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, 1999. (Part 4 of the Club's 1958 Keepsake, *Gold Rush Steamers*, by Elwin M. Eldridge, commented on the career of this luckless vessel.) This is a wide-ranging study with many illustrations and interesting, useful appendices. The emphasis on numismatics adds a unique dimension to this Gold Rush saga.



Our long-time member and donor Monsignor Francis J. Weber has sent us his autobiography, *Memories of an Old Country Priest*, (Saint Francis Historical Society, Mission Hills, California, Anno Domini MM). Msgr. Weber takes readers from his childhood in Indiana (related with charm and humor) to California; through education at Saint John Seminary and ordination to the priesthood in 1958. Impossible in the space at our command to summarize Msgr. Weber's accomplishments and travels and acquaintances — including Hollywood leading ladies as well as Catholic dignitaries and others — but we must mention that books figure largely in this versatile cleric's account of his years thus far. Many Club members know him for his miniature books and his ecclesiastical histories, most of which he has donated to the library.

Anthony Bliss, Curator of The Bancroft Library's typographical artifacts collection, has sent us a copy of the second edition of the catalogue to the collection, compiled by Club member Flora Elizabeth Reynolds. We appreciate having this guide to a notable local resource.



From Timothy Hawley, Louisville bookseller, came *Shame*, a post-modern blues-y poem by Randy Newman. It is one of fifteen copies, and very prettily done — so it is difficult to know why Hawley refers to his gift as "the latest — and possibly weirdest — publication from the Contre Coup Press." Thanks!



Thanks go to Club member Judith Robinson, the author, who has given the library a copy of *The Hearsts: An American Dynasty*, published by the University of Delaware Press in 1991. This is a meaty study, illustrated, and rich in detail about a family of almost mythic stature—surely so in California, where their name endures, literally, on many buildings and monuments. There is a paperback edition from Avon Books (1992), available to visitors at San Simeon, but our hardbound copy will be shelved in our collection of works by the Club's author-members.



The library has received so many gifts of late that there is little room for detailed description, but we are grateful: To the author, Clifford James Walker, for *One Eye Closed, the Other Red: The California Bootlegging Years*; to the author, Becky Boudway, for *Treasure in the Dust*; to Barbara Jane Land for a copy of *California 49*; to Fred and Barbara Voltmer for the Havilah Press's first letterpress monograph, *Mark Twain and the Great Base Ball Match* by Darryl Brock; to the publisher, Ruth Gottstein of Volcano Press, for John Doble's *Journal and Letters from the Mines*; to Douglas Pepin for Doris Shaw Castro's *James H. Carson's California, 1847-1853*; and to Betty Lyman Potter for *Captain A. A. Ritchie* and *The Life of George Henry Goddard* by Dr. Albert Shumate and *A Friend to Man* by George D. Lyman, M. D. Another to note is Jonathan Clark's gift of his dos-à-dos accordion book, *Cut-Paper*, photographs by Frederick Sommer, and *Frederick Sommer Makes a Cut-Paper*, photographs by Jonathan Clark; this product of

the Artichoke Press was created with the assistance of a Book Club of California grant. These are all wonderful additions to the library, and we hope that there will be space in later issues for more details about them.

### Serendipity

#### MUSINGS by the Committee Chairman

With the last issue, Pat Reagh closed out his tenure as *QN-L* Printer. We loved his printing, punning, layout, and whimsical art, and had even more fun working with him — as we practice to enter the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. “HooReagh! For Patrick,” we say, and “Reagh On,” after Reagh printed us a gorgeous keepsake for the joint Roxburghe-Zamarano meeting October 14.

For those who say “Who?Reagh?,” find more of his crisp, well-illustrated work through acquisition of the Book Club’s 1981 and 1982 keepsakes. *California Printing*, Parts 2 and 3 being available, offers “A selected List of books which are Significant or Representative of a California Style of Printing.” Bruce L. Johnson edits the former, 1890-1925; and Sandra Kirshenbaum the latter, 1925-1975. With felicitous writing, a mixture of history, literature, and printing design, we find them good reading, and a bargain at \$15 for the two, or half that for each.

Peter Koch comes aboard and we have only Hard Words for him. “Hard Words?” you ask? “Why?” Well, we poor scribblers have a hard time Koching puns, especially as we did not catch Koch’s August exhibit at the University of Montana, Missoula. At the town of his birth, Koch displayed “Hard Words” — creatively produced prints from “found” type blocks and photographic blocks taken from rural century-old newspaper offices where Koch purchased even older presses.

Koch’s theme grew out of harsh, hard Montana life. Peter Koch himself wrote, “Hauling wood. Living on catfish.” A few days later, this young university man noted, “Very hot and nothing to eat.” We see somewhere a transition into a paying profession like printing, but this regimen was back in 1869, and experienced by Koch’s namesake Danish great-grandfather.

Prints remain available! They range in price from \$600 to \$2,000, and in size from DEAD and GONE at 26 by 46 and 20 by 34 inches

to FROZE and HARD at 25 by 32 and 33 by 40 inches. Koch struck an edition of ten of these digital Iris Prints, the specialty of collaborator Montanan Griff Williams. This edition of ten also includes two sets of nine each, 16 by 25 inches of "Good Men:" Deep, Pure, Firm, Fair, Rich, Open, Good, True, and Easy, and the same men printed negatively as "Bad Men:" Base, Mean, Weak, Dull, Vile, Rude, Slow, Dumb, and Loud.

(Note: Koch gives measurements in dinky French Revolutionary units, but until my BCC *QN-L* pay comes in Assignats, I am not using such tiny stuff.)

For those wishing a boxed portfolio of 10 by 14 inch signed relief prints pulled from the original wood and lead types and found photoengravings, he offers that, too. Nine prints of Hard, Froze, Shot, Lost, Gone, Dead, Patrons, Good Men, and Bad Men are available in an edition of twenty for \$1,000. If you want 'em, quickly contact Peter Koch, Printer, at 2203 Fourth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710 (510) 849-0673.

Peter Koch has graciously allowed the *Quarterly New-Letter* to publish his closing talk, "Philosophy & Printing in the Real West," summarizing a quarter-century of experience. Believing that "Lead Ain't Dead," we glean from the catalogue that "Koch has been called the best letter press printer working in America today." To catch a quick check of Koch quality, check the BCC's latest keepsake on Lithography! (Available at \$35 post paid).

BCC director Vincent J. Lozito, besides being the driving force behind our new student memberships, is invaluable upriver at the City of the Plain. The title of his latest publication, a handsome twenty-page pamphlet from the Haunted C & P Press, says it all: "THE SIXTH DECADE: A 1999 Supplement to the Sacramento Book Collectors Club 1989 Publication: *The First Half Century: The Sacramento Book Collectors Club, 1939-1989*." See Lozito regarding the availability of copies.

Coming in the *QN-L* is a review of the Sacramento Book Collectors Club's fine book, *A Young Swiss in California: The Gold Rush Account of Theophile De Rutte, [1849-1852]* (1992) translated by the late Mary Grace Paquette, one of our BCC keepsake writers, and a bargain at \$40. For copies, contact Treasurer Bob Dickover, who is also a val-

ued member of the BCC Publications Committee, at 7676 Eastgate Avenue, Citrus Heights, CA 95610; (916) 962-2528, for details.

Now that the old movie *I Remember Momma*, about Norwegian immigrants in San Francisco, has mentally placed us in Northern Europe, we see that the Michael Dawson Gallery, an amplification of Dawson's Book Shop, featured an exhibit this past fall on the snapshots of a young Dane in the Bay City, "Harry Smith: Magic Moments. Photographs by a San Francisco Youth, 1900-1913." This is also the title of a 1981 book companion to the exhibit (\$25). Photography dealer Stephen White found Smith's glass-plate negatives in 1976, and subsequently asked master printer Richard Sullivan to produce quality palladium prints. One such 11 x 14 photograph is \$850.

Once boosterism gets in your blood, that's it. In November, Gary Kurutz, co-author of *California Calls You*, joined with Jennifer Watts, photograph curator of The Huntington Library, on a Larchmont Salon panel to discuss how photography lured tourists and settlers to California. However, you cannot talk, especially at a Dawson's Books gathering, without "stuff." Victoria Dailey and Phil Nathanson, noted collectors of Southern California photographs and ephemeral boosterism, joined Kurutz and Watts on the panel.

Wish to see a booklover cry? Buy a new hardback, find it is only glued and not sewn, and watch the pages fall out. What happens when such a book comes before a hand bookbinder? She angrily writes a denunciation of such bad practice. In the Stanford Library's summer issue of *Imprint*, BCC past president Joanne Sonnichsen sums up the situation superbly in just a title: "Written to Last, Bound to Self-Destruct." She notes succinctly, "For 'perfect' binding, read 'inexpensive.'" We add, "imperfect." The glued text-block binding for cheaper paperbacks will not do for any hardcover book meant to live. Acid-free paper lasts for centuries; "perfect" bindings may be disbound in days. Sonnichsen declares, "As book buyers, we have a right to demand proper construction in the hardcover books we buy." DEMAND "Sewn!"

We came across the year 2000 exhibit catalogue for the 59th annual exhibit by the Rounce & Coffin Club of Los Angeles of twenty-nine choice Western Books. Of course, the BCC was represented. Colin

Franklin's *Exploring Japanese Books and Scrolls*, according to our Southern California jurists, was "a large, sumptuous book of beautiful objects and insightful writing," and immediately sold out.

Jonathan Clark produced this masterpiece, and a sample of his work is readily available: The BCC's 1994 keepsake, *Hand Bookbinding*, edited by Florian Shasky and Joanne Sonnichsen. It emphasizes recent Bay Area masters and is yours for \$15. This is a good number, since the Panama Pacific International Exposition proposed for 1915 encouraged the founding of the Book Club in 1912, and in 1915, the PPIE sponsored the first exhibition of hand bindings in California. Belle McMurtry Young, a BCC founder and wife of BCC president William R.K. Young, won a gold medal for her bindings. After Morgan A. Gunst sponsored a similar exhibit at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939, hand book binding really took off. One collector so influenced was Petaluma journalist Duncan Olmsted, recently honored by a memorial keepsake.

An allied subject lies within another available keepsake: Mary Tanenbaum and Sören Edgren's 1988 *Chinese Book Arts and California* at \$10.50 — close enough to 10/10, the date of former San Franciscan Sun Yat-sen's Revolution. Its contributors cover everything from 1850 newspapers through prints by Jules Tavernier and Ernest Peixotto, to turn of the century — twentieth century, that is — postcards. Of course, Chinese arts influenced fine printing, as works by John Henry Nash, Wilder Bentley the Elder — whose wit was the subject of a autumn BCC exhibit — and Adrian Wilson testify.

As this issue appears, a book equal in beauty to Franklin's comes among you, dear readers: Claudine Chalmers's *Splendide Californie!*, splendidly created by master printer Jim Robertson of The Yolla Bolly Press. Buy immediately to avoid heartbreak.

Next of the Rounce & Coffin Club Book Club entries, but second only alphabetically as "F" comes before "S," was Jack Werner Stauffacher's *A typographic journey*, "a must for all who are interested in the world of fine printing, especially as practiced on the west coast." Those who waited to buy now have to search booksellers' catalogues. However, an equally impressive study of fine printing by Stauffacher is still here: *Porter Garnett: Philosophical Writings on the Ideal Book* (1993) at \$120.

We would say more, but type lice have gotten to our writi [chomp, chomp, chomp].

—Robert J. Chandler

Ever-inventive Joe D'Ambrosio has now patented a hand-made, adjustable hard cover for paperback books; contact him in Phoenix to order this delightful means of sprucing up those tattered Penguins and beautifying your cherished Signets and Bantams: (602) 550-5761.

The San Francisco Center for the Book ("where book arts happen every day") recently launched the Society for the Book Arts; those wishing to support this vital and multi-faceted organization may still become founding members. For more information: San Francisco Center for the Book, 300 De Haro Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; telephone (415) 565-0545; email [info@sfcb.org](mailto:info@sfcb.org).

Through January 6, 2001, visitors to the Green Library at Stanford University may view the traveling exhibition *In Company: Robert Creeley's Collaborations*, Elizabeth Licata of the Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University, curator. Becky Fischbach of Stanford's Department of Special Collections notes that the exhibition encompasses visual art, book art, poetry, and fine press printing. "Robert Creeley is an artist's poet," declares Donald Sultan, "...one of the most thoughtful poets ever to explore this complex relationship between the eye and the object." For more information, telephone (650) 725-1020.

### Dorothy Abbe

Dorothy Abbe became a member of The Book Club of California in March of 1951. At that time, the Executive Secretary of the Book Club was Mrs. Elizabeth (Betty) Downs. What began as routine business correspondence between the two ladies evolved into a personal exchange of news.

During that period Dorothy was creating her incomparable *Dwiggins' Marionettes*, and she described her challenges to Betty. Then, in

1955, the first major Western exhibit of W. A. Dwiggins was held at the Book Club, and Dorothy came west to install the exhibit and to talk about the work of Dwiggins as well as her own. In 1974, Dorothy presented Copy No. 2 of four copies of *Dwiggins' Marionettes* to the Club because she "wanted a copy on the West Coast." To celebrate this magnificent gesture, the Book Club held an exhibit in 1975 to honor Dorothy as well as the book. When Dorothy was no longer able to travel, contact continued by telephone, and West Coast friends involved in books and printing paid occasional visits to Hingham. Her interest in the welfare of the *Marionettes* remained lively. One section of the Club's 1997 *Treasures* keepsake is devoted to it.

On June 13, 1999, Dorothy Abbe died in a Massachusetts nursing home at the age of eighty-nine. By her wish, there was no notice of her death. Even the book community, which so admired her, did not learn of it for nine months.

Dorothy Abbe hid her own many gifts throughout a lifetime. Instead, she chose the role of promoter for the work of William Addison Dwiggins. He was her mentor and her kindred spirit. They shared the joys of hobby printing, using the Pütterschein-Hingham imprint. The Press flourished from 1947 to 1956, and Dorothy's considerable contributions to it have only recently come to light. Dorothy published two important books about Dwiggins and his work, *Dwiggins' Marionettes* in 1968 and *Stenciled Ornament* in 1979. She established his definitive archive at the Boston Public Library as well as the annual Dwiggins Lecture. She lectured widely on behalf of Bill Dwiggins and fiercely protected his name and his work. Her own contributions to printing, book design, typography, photography, writing, teaching, and encouraging young printers with their craft was withheld by her choice.

In June of 2000, at a remembrance gathering at the Boston Public Library, many who were inspired by her paid tribute, telling of her exacting standards of printing and book design — which won for her three AIGA awards. Her students remembered her as a demanding teacher, and young printers recalled her generosity at the Dwiggins studio in Hingham. Her powerful photographs were on display — few knew that she had taught herself this art. She was also a generous supporter of environmental and human rights causes. In August

of 1999 her archives became available at the Boston Public Library, and their study has given rise to a book to be published in 2001.

— John Borden, San Francisco, and Anne Bromer, Boston

### Neal Harlow

LIBRARIAN, HISTORIAN, AUTHOR

Neal Harlow, long-time Book Club member and author, died in Los Angeles on July 13 at age ninety-two. Harlow's books are collected by many, but perhaps the most sought-after volume is his first publication with The Book Club of California, *The Maps of San Francisco Bay: From the Spanish Discovery in 1769 to the American Occupation*. This rare volume from 1950 was designed and printed by the Grabhorn Press and is considered one of their finest typographical efforts.

Mr. Harlow's most recent publication (1997) with The Book Club of California was a brilliant collaboration with August Frugé, author and emeritus Director of the University of California Press. Together they translated from the French and edited one of the most essential volumes of early California history, particularly the California Mis-

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sion Period prior to secularization: *A Voyage to California, the Sandwich Islands, & Around the World in the Years 1826-1829* by Auguste Duhamel-Cilly. Until its publication by the Club, this work, a "Zamaramano 80" title, had never been available in English in book form. Scholars had had to rely on the French or Italian editions in their research — all the more surprising because the narrative is exciting, well written, and dramatic throughout. A trade edition, in a different format and authorized by the Club, is currently available from the University of California Press.

Other Harlow publications include *Maps and Surveys of the Pueblo Lands of Los Angeles* (1976, Dawson's Book Shop), *The City of Angels and the City of Saints* (1978, Huntington Library), *Maps of the Pueblo Lands of San Diego* (1987, Dawson's Book Shop), and *California Conquered: War and Peace of the Pacific, 1846-1850* (1982, U. C. Press). All are enduring works.

But it was the library profession that earned Harlow his keep. He received his master's degree in library science at the University of

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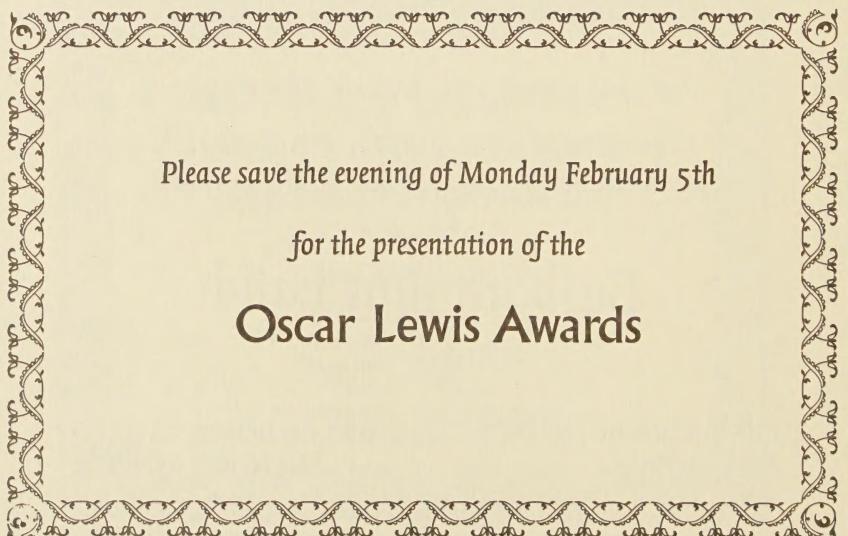
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California, Berkeley. He was then appointed to head the California Section of the California State Library, Sacramento; then Head of Special Collections at Powell Library, University of California, Los Angeles; then a decade as director of University of British Columbia library, Vancouver, British Columbia. He retired in 1969 after a stint as dean of the Rutgers University Graduate School of Library Service, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Along the way he served as president of the Association of College and Research Libraries, as a council member of the American Library Association, and even as president of the Canadian Library Association. Always a strong environmentalist, he was an avid hiker and wilderness camper, notably with his lifelong friend, colleague, and collaborator August Frugé.

Neal Harlow remains a major figure in American librarianship, education, and California history. The Book Club of California is proud to have been his publisher.

—Harlan Kessel



Please save the evening of Monday February 5th

for the presentation of the

**Oscar Lewis Awards**

## ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

### New Sustaining Members

<i>New Sustaining Members</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
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Jean H. Gabriel	San Francisco	Claudine Chalmers
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Dennis Holsapple	Wilmette, IL	Robert L. Veatch
Cathy & Glen Miranker	San Francisco	John Crichton
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### *New Regular Members*

William C. Auradou	Healdsburg	Claudine Chalmers
Barbara Bundschu	San Francisco	Claudine Chalmers
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Jim Flack	San Francisco	John Paxton
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Kendall Gubler	Cedar City, UT	Keith Irwin
Robert & Colleen Haas	Sausalito	Claudine Chalmers
Mark Hime	Century Park	John Crichton
Myron H. Luria	Jerusalem, Israel	Robert Haines
Kathleen Manning	Pacifica	John Crichton
Marc Martini	San Francisco	Claudine Chalmers
Stephen H. Meyer	Monterey	Claudine Chalmers
Freddy Michalski	Montlhéry, France	Claudine Chalmers
Nancy Newkom	Yuba City	Claudine Chalmers
Katrina Rahn	Mountain View	Membership Committee
Jerome Schweich	Berkeley	Earl Emelson
Alice & Ira Steinman	Mill Valley	Claudine Chalmers
Michael R. Thompson	Los Angeles	John Crichton
Irvin D. Ungar	Burlingame	John Crichton
Roger Werner	Stockton	Robert J. Chandler
Robert Woods	Pleasant Hill	Alan Bern

The following member has transferred from Regular to Patron status:

The following member has transferred from Sustaining to Patron status:

George Kellar Sausalito

The following member has transferred from Regular to Sustaining status:

Douglas C. Johns San Francisco

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